

El
5-3-

THE INVERACITIES OF ANTIVIVISECTION

mk

W. W. KEEN, M.D., LL.D.
Emeritus Professor of Surgery, Jefferson Medical College
PHILADELPHIA

*Reprinted from The Journal of the American Medical Association
Nov. 4, 1916, Vol. LXVII, pp. 1390 and 1391*

COPYRIGHT, 1916
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
FIVE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIVE NORTH DEARBORN STREET
CHICAGO

⁹⁻¹¹
Dissection
pamphlet

THE INVERACITIES OF ANTIVIVISECTION

W. W. KEEN, M.D., LL.D.

Emeritus Professor of Surgery, Jefferson Medical College
PHILADELPHIA

In my book on "Animal Experimentation and Medical Progress" I wrote as follows:

I HAVE BEEN COMPELLED TO CONCLUDE THAT IT IS NOT SAFE TO ACCEPT ANY STATEMENT WHICH APPEARS IN ANTIVIVISECTION LITERATURE AS TRUE, AND ANY QUOTATION OR TRANSLATION AS CORRECT, UNTIL I HAVE COMPARED THEM WITH THE ORIGINALS AND VERIFIED THEIR ACCURACY FOR MYSELF.

It seems to be curiously impossible for the antivivisectionists to make straightforward, accurate statements of fact, or even accurate quotations. As to the latter, I have shown in my book very many misquotations, mistranslations, omissions, and even interpolations not in the originals.

Two recent instances and a third of a somewhat older date, corroborating my statement, occur in two antivivisection journals, the *Open Door*, p. 5 of the issue for April, 1916, and the *Journal of Zoöphily* for May, 1916, p. 74, and the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* of Dec. 19, 1913.

Dr. Wile of the University of Michigan made a small trephine opening in the skulls of six persons who had become insane as a result of paresis (the general paralysis of the insane). The syphilitic nature of this disease, which is a frequent cause of insanity, has been long suspected and partly proved. Wile removed a very small portion of the human brain tissue from these patients and injected it into rabbits. The result of this injection proved conclusively that the brain tissue in these cases was full of the active germs of syphilis and that syphilis is the cause of the paresis.

These investigations, however, in my opinion, were wholly unjustifiable. This opinion, too, I know is shared by others who, like myself, are warm advocates of research by animal experimentation. The very fact that we can obtain information of the greatest value to animals and human beings alike, by experiments on animals (which are almost identical with human beings both in structure and function) is the strongest reason why we should utilize animals instead of human beings. Hence I wish to register here my condemnation of Dr. Wile's experiments and a protest against any similar experiments in the future.

The article in the *Open Door* has this title :

VIVISECTION OF THE HUMAN BRAIN

BY UDO J. WILE, M.D., UNIV. OF MICHIGAN

(Excerpts from *Jour. Experimental Medicine*, Rockefeller Institute,
Feb. 1, 1916)

The first paragraph of this article is in quotation marks and reads thus :

"THE AIM OF SCIENCE IS THE DISCOVERY OF A NEW FACT AT ANY SACRIFICE OF LIFE. . . . I DO NOT KNOW ANY HIGHER USE WE CAN PUT A MAN TO.—PROFESSOR SLOSSON."

Then follow a number of "excerpts" from Dr. Wile's paper, also in quotation marks, with running commentaries.

Any incautious reader would think that Professor Slosson was a red-handed vivisectionist, and also that the quotation from Professor Slosson was a part of Dr. Wile's paper—a sort of motto expressing Wile's own sentiments. Not a word of this quotation from Professor Slosson appears in Dr. Wile's original paper. It is thrust into the text to catch the eye and mislead the reader. Professor Slosson's communications appear in the *Independent* for Dec. 12, 1895, p. 1679, and Feb. 13, 1896, p. 207.

As I suspected, the quotation does not reproduce (as a quotation always should) the *ipsissima verba* of the author. It should read :

THE AIM OF SCIENCE IS THE ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AT ANY SACRIFICE OF HUMAN LIFE. . . . WE [NOT "I"] DO NOT KNOW OF ANY HIGHER USE WE CAN PUT A MAN TO.

But while changing the wording of an excerpt as in this case is blameworthy, a far more important sin is an inexcusable but evident intention to make a wrong impression on the mind of the reader by this isolated, unqualified quotation. In his paper, Professor Slosson was urging young men to devote a lifetime of labor to the advancement of knowledge as the highest of human callings. It was an appeal for a life of self-sacrifice and devotion to scholarship even at the cost of *their own* lives. Among the fields of research he specified physics, mathematics, geography and pathology, sciences in which vivisection is never employed. He expressly disclaimed (p. 208) any reference to the sacrifice of other people. Could anything be clearer than the following additional quotation which I take from Professor Slosson's paper?

IF HE [THE INVESTIGATOR] SUCCEEDS . . . HIS VERY NAME IS SOON DROPPED FROM THE PARAGRAPH HE HAS ADDED TO THE WORLD'S KNOWLEDGE. THIS IS AS IT SHOULD BE . . . IT IS FITTING THAT HIS NAME SHOULD BE FORGOTTEN WHILE THE TRUTH FOR WHICH HE GAVE HIS LIFE SHALL LIVE FOREVER.

Viewed in this new light, and recalling the many martyrs of science, who would not say that Professor Slosson was absolutely right? Such juggling with words, even though the very words of the author, should receive the sternest reproof.

At the time when he wrote the article from which the quotation is taken, Professor Slosson was professor of chemistry in the University of Wyoming. He had never done then, nor has he ever done since, any experiments on animals. Yet quoted apart from the text and without the explanation I have just given, readers of the article in the *Open Door* would inevitably think that he was an ardent advocate even of human vivisection.

Later in his paper, Professor Slosson considers vivisection; but again the sacrifice of human life to which he alludes is the lives of the experimenters themselves.

While condemning Dr. Wile, I wish, however, to be just to him. Dr. Wile used every precaution known to science—careful disinfection, an efficient anesthetic, great care in selecting a location where no harm would be done to the brain functions; and the prompt recovery of all the patients showed that his precautions were efficacious. It may be objected that Wile used no anesthetic in the brain itself. This was wholly unnecessary as the brain has *no feeling whatever*. I well remember a case thirteen years ago—a terrible crush of the top of the skull with loss of much bone and brain substance. Three days after the accident, when I was slicing and even scraping away some of the protruding brain substance, the patient, fully conscious (as there was no need for an anesthetic) suffered not the least pain, but shook with laughter when I told him “he had too much brains” and I was scraping some of them away. I saw him within a year in perfect condition physically and mentally.

As Dr. Wile did not state in his article whether the patients lived or died, I inquired as to the results. Dr. Victor C. Vaughan, dean of the University Medical School, in which Dr. Wile works, assures me that *not one* of the patients suffered any ill effects.

Only of late has syphilis been definitely recognized as the principal cause of paresis, which blights not only the body but so often eventually destroys the mind. Remedies—even salvarsan—which may be efficient in curing syphilitic affections in other parts of the body do not reach the germs in the brain. These are peculiarly virulent. As a result of Dr. Wile's researches it may hereafter become possible in the early stages of the disease to kill these germs even in their remotest stronghold. We may then be able to combat this dreadful affliction and restore both the bodies and the minds of these unfortunates.

Another misrepresentation of Wile's investigation appears in the *Journal of Zoöphily*. It says, "A long-nozzled syringe was inserted . . . and a *syringeful* of brain contents was extracted." Dr. Wile's paper distinctly states that "a small cylinder of gray and white matter with some fluid from the ventricle was removed." No "syringeful" was removed, but only a "small cylinder" like part of a pin.

The sneer of the *Journal of Zoöphily* that Dr. Wile "used apparently only a local anesthetic" shows either ignorance or wilful misrepresentation. Many hundreds—or rather thousands—of operations have already been done on human beings by "only a local anesthetic" without pain. It is a surgical method of anesthesia as well recognized as that by ether or chloroform, and has largely supplanted other anesthetics in certain operations, because of obvious surgical advantages.

The *Journal of Zoöphily* is the last paper which should urge any objection to "human vivisection," for its late editor-in-chief, Mrs. Caroline Earle White, was an avowed advocate of "human vivisection."

Replying to an address of my own in which I asserted that experiments "must not be tested first upon man" she asserted, "on the contrary that in the majority of cases they *must* be tested *first* upon man, or not tested at all." Now if no new method nor any new drug had ever been tried, either on animals or man, it is evident that we should today be still practicing the medicine and surgery of the middle ages.

Still further, Mrs. White opposed my plea for attempting by experiments on animals to discover an antidote to snake venom which in India kills over 20,000 human beings every year. She actually proposed that "the experimenters go to India where they could find as large a field . . . as they require in the *poor victims themselves*. Here is an opportunity such as is not often offered for *experimenting on human beings*, since as they would invariably die from snake bite there can be no *objection to trying upon them every variety of antidote that can be discovered*." This, she declared, "is the one case in which they could be observed with so *much satisfaction and certainty upon man*" [all italics my own]. Could there be a more cruel—and as elsewhere I also have shown—a more absurd proposal?

But New York and Philadelphia must not claim superiority in misstatements over Boston. In the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* of Dec. 19, 1913, Mrs. Jessica L. C. Henderson, a resident of a suburb of Boston, and a vice president of the American Antivivisection Society, said:

WE EAGERLY OFFER OUR CITATIONS IN THE HOPE THAT THE PUBLIC WILL TAKE THE TROUBLE TO VERIFY THEM. DOCTOR CRILE'S BOOK, FROM WHICH THE ANTIVIVISECTIONISTS QUOTED ACCURATELY, REPEATEDLY DESCRIBES EXPERIMENTS FOLLOWED BY THE WORDS "NO ANESTHESIA." THE BOOK HAS BEEN WITHDRAWN FROM PUBLIC SALE.

I at once challenged both statements. As to the latter statement the book has never been "withdrawn." No more copies were for sale (except possibly second-hand) simply because the entire edition had been "sold out," the publishers inform me.

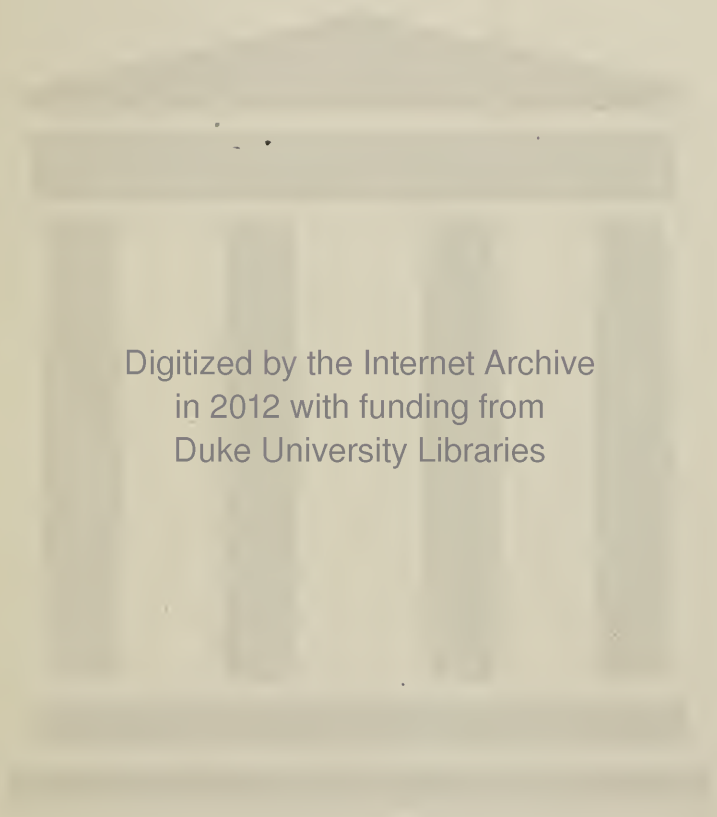
As to the first charge, I asked Mrs. Henderson to give me the pages on which the words "no anesthesia" "repeatedly" occurred. She assured me in reply "that at the first opportunity I shall vindicate my reputation." Then began a series of excuses and subterfuges. "The days and the hours are all too few." Next it is her "firm conviction that the edition has been recalled and another issued" in which these culprit words were omitted. This was disproved by the statement to me by the publishers (J. B. Lippincott Company), which I communicated to her, that only one edition of Crile's book on "Shock" had ever been printed. She said also that she had advertised for a copy and when she obtained it she would "at once comply with your [my] request for the page numbers." Thereupon I sent her my own copy, asking her to return it with the pages indicated. After a long interval it was returned, but without any marked pages.

Next she claimed that she had not indicated which book by Dr. Crile was the one in which these words appeared! To this I replied that I had all of Dr. Crile's books and if she would indicate which was the guilty one I would send it to her at once. This offer was never accepted. As a matter of fact, in her letter to the *Public Ledger* she *did* indicate which book it was, for she described it as the one "from which the antivivisectionists quoted accurately." These quotations I have compared with Dr. Crile's book on shock and found that they *were* taken from his book on shock, and for a wonder they were accurately quoted. I have "repeatedly" reminded Mrs. Henderson that I am "eagerly" awaiting her "vindication" by giving me the pages, but a long period of eloquent silence has followed. I despair of ever receiving them. A good reason exists—there are no such pages.

Why should she not follow the example of her illustrious co-worker, the late Mrs. White? The latter had stated that certain experiments were done on "between forty and fifty children" and that every one of them died. When the fact was pointed out to her that "lumbar puncture" (now an everyday and often indispensable means of diagnosis) was done on only twenty-seven living children of whom only fourteen died (not one of whom died from the lumbar puncture, but from the various diseases of which they were the victims), she promptly and publicly acknowledged her error. Mrs. Henderson owes it to Dr. Crile, but above all to herself, to acknowledge that her statement was incorrect and to offer an apology to Dr. Crile. Had Mrs. Henderson's charge been private, my reply would have been also private; but her charge was specific and public, and made in a very widely circulated and responsible newspaper; hence my public reply.

But what can one expect from persons who heartlessly call the recent terrible epidemic of infantile paralysis as "the Summer's Foolish Panic" and "the New York Infantile Paralysis Epidemic a Fake" and commend the treatment by the Chinese who "divide the human body into twelve sections all connected by interlacing nerves," each section being "rooted in some vital organ"! (*Open Door*, October, 1916.)

1729 Chestnut Street.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
Duke University Libraries

